

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE QUESTION

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARAS RE-NUMBERED)

BEGIN SUMMARY: CDU SECRETARY GENERAL BIEDENKOPF

ANNOUNCED ON APRIL 27 THAT HE WOULD PROPOSE TO THE

CDU EXECUTIVE BOARD AT ITS MAY 5 MEETING THAT RHEIN-

LAND-PFALZ MINISTER PRESIDENT HELMUT KOHL BE NOMINATED

CDU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE. BIEDENKOPF'S ANNOUNCEMENT

CAUSED CONSIDERABLE STIR ON THE NATIONAL POLITICAL

SCENE. CSU SPOKESMEN CALLED BIEDENKOPF'S STATEMENT A

PERSONAL VIEW AND OTHER CDU POLITICIANS RESERVED JUDG-

MENT. (KOHL DID NOT COMMENT.) BIEDENKOPF'S STATEMENT

WAS LIKELY INTENDED TO DEMONSTRATE CDU SOLIDARITY IN

ORDER TO FORESTALL CSU ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE THE CDU AND

BRING ABOUT A STRAUSS CANDIDACY. THE TIMING OF THE

STATEMENT IS INTENDED TO PICK UP SOME SWING VOTES IN

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NEXT SUNDAY'S LAENDER ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY

1. CDU SECRETARY GENERAL KURT BIEDENKOPF'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WOULD PROPOSE KOHL AS CDU CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE AT THE MAY 5 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HAS CREATED A STIR INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE UNION PARTY. THE BAVARIAN BASED CSU CHARACTERIZED BIEDENKOPF'S STATEMENT AS A PERSONAL VIEW AND KOHL'S RIVAL, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN MINISTER PRESIDENT GERHARD STOLTENBERG, SAID THAT PERSONNEL AND POLICY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 1976 CAMPAIGN WOULD BE DISCUSSED AFTER THE MAY 4 LAENDER ELECTIONS. CDU/CSU FRAKTION PRESS SPOKESMAN ACKERMANN NOTED THAT FRAKTION CHAIRMAN CARSTENS HAD NEVER OFFICIALLY SOUGHT THE CANDIDACY AND THAT CARSTENS AGREED WITH THE POSITION THAT THE DECISION AS TO THE CANDIDATE WOULD NOT BE MADE UNTIL AFTER THE MAY 4 ELECTIONS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA. - KOHL HAS NOT COMMENTED ON THE BIEDENKOPF STATEMENT. THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN MINISTER PRESIDENT CANDIDATE, HEINRICH KOEPLER, WELCOMED BIEDENKOPF'S STATEMENT, BUT SAID THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO PREJUDICE THE DECISION OF THE RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEES. THE SPD AND FDP CHARACTERIZED THE BIEDENKOPF ANNOUNCEMENT AS PREMATURE.

2. CDU POLITICIANS HAVE IN THE LAST WEEKS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT KOHL HAS THE NOMINATION ALL BUT LOCKED UP. THEY BELIEVE THAT STRAUSS WITHHELD AN ENDORSEMENT OF KOHL IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN HIS NEGOTIATING POSITION ON QUESTIONS OF POLICY AND PERSONNEL. BIEDENKOPF HIMSELF TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER LAST WEEK, THAT KOHL'S CANDIDACY WAS ACCEPTED BY ALL THE KEY FIGURES AND WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION WAS A FORM OF POLITICAL POKER. NEVERTHELESS, BIEDENKOPF'S PUBLIC STATEMENT CAME AS A SURPRISE. IT IS LIKELY THAT BIEDENKOPF MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT FOR INTERNAL PARTY PURPOSES (I.E., TO PREVENT THE CSU FROM PLAYING THE CDU CANDIDATES AGAINST EACH OTHER IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE CANDIDACY FOR STRAUSS) AND TO HELP THE CDU IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND THE SAARLAND. BIEDENKOPF IS ATTEMPTING TO MINIMIZE ANY NEGATIVE EFFECT STRAUSS MIGHT HAVE IN THE ELECTIONS (AS MANY BELIEVE HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAD IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN) BY PROJECTING KOHL AS THE CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN THE HOPE OF PICKING UP SWING VOTERS WHO MIGHT NOT VOTE FOR THE CDU BECAUSE OF A POSSIBLE STRAUSS CANDIDACY IN 1976.

3. PRESS REPORTS CLAIM THAT BIEDENKOPF INFORMED KEY CDU AND CSU POLITICIANS INCLUDING STRAUSS THAT HE WAS GOING TO MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT. THE FACT THAT NEITHER

STRAUSS NOR OTHER KEY CDU POLITICIANS HAVE BEEN VOCAL
IN THEIR PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE BIEDENKOPF STATEMENT
IMPLIES THAT HE HAD RECEIVED TACIT APPROVAL BEFOREHAND.
HILLENBRAND

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